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CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

*The Commercial High School as a part of Secondary Education**

It was with great pleasure that I responded to the invitation of your Committee to present in person to your consideration the project of a Commercial High School.

All citizens of Philadelphia may well take pride and satisfaction in the evidences of a new interest in our civic life which are manifesting themselves on every hand. Everything which has for its object the improvement of our beloved city may now count on a respectful hearing at least—not merely from the select few who, in all communities are concerned about the common weal; but as well from the great mass of our citizens, rich and poor alike. Public interest in our water supply, in our gas supply, in improved pavements, in our parks, in our city administration in general, is growing at an appreciable rate, while public education is just now receiving such marked attention in every branch, as justifies the hope that its interests are to be looked after more carefully in the future than the past.

As I was asked to present this subject to an audience composed both of educationists and of representatives of other callings in life, brought together by a common interest in that most important of all public questions—education, I shall pursue mainly two lines of thought, considering, first, the relation of such an institution to the educational system in general, and second, its relation to the business interests of the community.

And first, as to its educational or pedagogical aspects. All secondary education should have a liberal tendency. Its main object should be to train the pupils to think, to aid them in getting possession of all their powers, and in acquiring habits of order, neatness, promptness, and fidelity. It should be regarded in a pre-eminent sense as a foundation upon which the pupil may build safely and rapidly in the future years. For a long time, men thought that the study of the classics and mathematics was the only method of laying such foundations, and even now the influence of that idea still remains powerful in the field of secondary education.

* Abstract of address by Professor Edmund J. James before the Educational Club of Philadelphia.

This idea did comparatively little harm as long as the mediæval conditions of life, in which the idea originated, still existed. But when the modern era opened and natural science with all its wonderful achievements started into life, it was only with the very greatest difficulty that it could secure any representation whatever in our schools and colleges, owing to the prevalence of the idea above mentioned. The adherents of the old style of education were not content with preserving it as one of the pathways toward culture—side by side with education based on modern subjects—but they insisted that it should still remain the only one.

The attempt was, of course, doomed to a failure—as surely as the later contest of the stage owners and stage drivers against the railways—but it served to hinder progress for a long period. Natural science, however, finally made its way into the schools and a road to culture was cast up, based on modern subjects.

The history of education repeated itself again immediately. The defenders of the old and the champions of the new education combined to prevent any further innovations. The representatives of natural science joined with the defenders of the classics in maintaining that there are only two roads to true culture—the classics and natural science. An illustration of this tendency was afforded in our own city a few years ago when the movement in favor of Manual Training High Schools was begun. These two parties united in opposing the introduction of the so-called Manual Training Schools on the ground that their curriculum could offer no suitable intellectual training. But the Manual Training Schools are demonstrating that there is still another road to culture besides that through the classics, mathematics, and natural sciences—in the narrow sense in which the last term is sometimes used.

And now those of us who believe in the training furnished by the Commercial High School as one of the legitimate avenues to education, maintain that there is still another highway to that state of mind and heart known as culture. Just as the study of human history—as expressed in language and literature; or as the study of the external world, as in natural science; or as the study of the principles of mechanical and artistic creation may lead the child on to the fullest development of its powers—one line of work appealing to one child and another to another; so the study of human history, as revealed in the relation of man to his environment, looked upon as a means of supplying his wants (*Political Economy*), and the study of human history as revealed in the development and organization of the complex machinery of business and society

(Politics and Sociology) are as truly means of mental development as any of the preceding; and appeal to some children, to whom any of the former is weariness of the flesh.

And just as the study of the classics will accomplish the highest educational result for one type of mind, and that of natural science for another, and that of mechanics and art for another, so that of politics, and economics, and business will do it for still another.

As educationists, we plead for this school in the interest of the educational enrichment of our scheme of public training. There are boys in our community to whom none of the existing courses appeal, whom this course would be a means of awakening, arousing, training, educating.

To put it another way, all of us believe that a proper educational foundation is absolutely necessary, and that the period of secondary education is the time for laying such foundation; but we cannot concede that there is only one kind of proper foundation. On the contrary, just as the character of the soil and the surrounding circumstances make a foundation which would be suitable for one building entirely unsuitable for another, so the variety in the structure of boys' minds, in their tastes, their inherited tendencies, their ambitions, point to the fact that no one scheme of education can lay suitable foundation for all boys in the community.

Variety of schools and of courses is, in our view, absolutely necessary to develop the latent intellectual wealth of society. These courses should all be thorough, liberal, culture-giving—and there should, in the interest of education itself, be at present in Philadelphia at least four such schools—one devoted to Language, Literature, and Mathematics; another to Mathematics and Natural Science; another to the principles underlying mechanical and artistic creation; and still another to Politics, Economics, and Business. The first two exist now in the Central High School, though it would be better if they were separated. The third is provided for by our Manual Training Schools; the fourth we are arguing for at present. It is not proposed that any one of these courses should exclude all the elements of the other. Quite the contrary. Each one would contain necessarily much that is found in the others; but it is meant simply, that the various courses shall be built up around the nuclei indicated.

It will thus be seen that while we argue for a Commercial High School, which shall answer the wants of a new class in the community, we are not asking for a trade school in any different sense from that in which the Central High School or the present Manual Training Schools are technical

or trade schools. The object of all three alike is liberal education, is foundation laying ; the only difference is in the subject matter of instruction used for the purpose.

Manifold and complicated are the conditions which determine the commercial prosperity or decadence of a city or a country—and he who assigns any one reason for it demonstrates his incapacity in this department of human investigation. Without wishing to assign too much importance to the following consideration, we may yet claim that it is a very fundamental condition of a flourishing trade that the directors of commerce and industry—those selected few, who by their natural talents and acquired skill have become the captains and princes in industry and trade—shall find it possible to obtain efficient assistance in their enterprises. The average man and woman in our society will never reach a loftier position than that of high private ; but the possibility of achievement on the part of great commanders, whether in war or trade, depends primarily upon the degree of intelligence and efficiency to be found in the average private.

Is there an adequate provision for this need in our community? Does the director of business enterprises find it easy to find the right kind of assistance? Ask any intelligent and successful business man among your acquaintances. I am not talking now, of course, of clerks, or stenographers, or typewriters, or bookkeepers—whose business is largely mechanical ; though even in this department it is safe to say that of fifty candidates for any fairly responsible position, not more than five can be considered eligible. I am thinking of positions which demand fidelity, intelligence, special knowledge, and sound judgment—responsible and discretionary positions in other words—positions in which initiative enterprise and reliable qualities are called for. I take it that there can be only one answer to this question, unless Philadelphia experience has been very different from that of business men in other cities and other countries.

My proposition then is that a school of the grade of the ordinary city high school—say our own Central High School, for example—whose curriculum should be made up to a considerable extent of subjects relating to modern trade and industry—its origin, development, organization, relations, etc.,—would do a substantial service to our trade and commerce by increasing the number of properly qualified young men who are seeking the positions of assistants in our commercial houses.

Of course, no one will maintain for an instant, that such a school could turn out young men acquainted with the details of commercial life, and qualified to take positions at the head of important branches of business—such knowledge and fitness can only be acquired in actual business life, and through the experience of years. But it could turn out young men, seventeen or eighteen years of age, with a deep interest in commercial life, with considerable knowledge of the general history of commerce, with some acquaintance with the most important operations of modern commercial business, with some knowledge of finance, with a good English education, and with an ambition to succeed in commercial undertakings—in a word, a band of youth ready to enter upon the work of acquiring business experience with eagerness and enthusiasm. The training which such a school could furnish would enable a lad to learn the business more thoroughly and in a shorter time than he could have done without such advantages. Such a school would, moreover, offer an opportunity to learn modern languages thoroughly, so that those boys who wished to prepare themselves to represent our firms abroad, could find good facilities for such education.

The value of a Commercial High School to the trade and commerce of a community has been amply demonstrated by a somewhat extended experience in continental countries. In the Europe of to-day, the law of competition is at work in the extremest form. The struggle of France and Germany and Italy and Austria and Russia for the supremacy in Europe has become so bitter and all absorbing, that no means of getting ahead is left unused. The ordinary methods employed in the military sphere are striking, and so well known as to call for no mention. But the methods in the industrial sphere are no less striking and fundamental—passing over the question of prohibitory and differential tariffs, which have been used in the most unsparing way—it is sufficient for us, in this connection, to direct attention to the evident belief, on the part of all the nations, that other things being approximately equal, the question of education is the fundamental question, and that that nation will ultimately triumph which secures the best educational results. Consequently, schools of all kinds have been established and developed, including military schools, to train soldiers and officers; agricultural schools to train farmers, who, by reason of intelligence, can hold their own against America and India; industrial schools of all sorts to train mechanics, foremen, etc., and finally, recognizing the importance of Commerce to Industry, commercial schools of all grades, from those intended to train

stenographers, clerks, shop girls, etc., to those for the future directors and managers of great business firms.

In proportion as competition has increased at home and abroad have these schools been multiplied. Only within a short time the German Government established, in Berlin, a school where youth, preparing for business careers in Asia, could learn all the leading languages of Eastern and Western Asia, including Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Turkish. France has done much the same, and in both countries there is the keenest rivalry in providing facilities for their youth to learn the leading modern languages spoken in the Western World, especially English, Italian, and Spanish. Belgium, which is so largely dependent for its prosperity on foreign trade, is following rapidly along the same line.

In Germany, the apprenticeship system in the business houses is still preserved, and the laws enable a parent to hold a merchant to a pretty close account for his duty toward the apprentice. But in spite of this fact, the popularity of the Commercial High School is rapidly increasing, because it is recognized that it offers a training for which the apprenticeship system is no adequate substitute. Many merchants allow youth in their employ, who are bound to service for a term of years, to attend these schools for a certain number of hours a day, and even pay their tuition for them to boot; because they consider the efficiency of the boys is vastly increased by it.

The results of these schools are evident, not merely in the improvement in business methods, which has gone on very rapidly in the last twenty years in these countries, but also in the work of these nations in foreign trade. Youth who have such a training are eagerly sought by English houses, either in England itself or in English trade centres. It is a well-recognized fact that German youth are, to an appreciable extent, supplanting English lads in the great commercial houses of London.

Various Parliamentary Commissions, appointed to examine into the causes of recent industrial depression in England and the reasons for the rapid growth of German commerce in places hitherto entirely subject to English influence, have emphasized this fact and have, furthermore, called attention to the circumstance that these German youth, who are employed in English houses, soon set up business for themselves and become most efficient agents of German firms in the very heart and centre of English trade. They attribute the willingness of English business men to employ German youth in preference to English youth, chiefly to

the fact that they ordinarily possess a much better general and special training. It is a significant fact, in this connection, that there is not, in all England, a single commercial high school which would bear comparison with any one of a hundred in Germany.

The most striking testimonial to the value of such schools to the trade and commerce of the locality and nation is to be found in the fact that the great majority of the most prominent continental schools are supported not by the government but by private associations of merchants and business men in general, or by boards of trade, chambers of commerce, and similar organizations.

Thus the Paris Chamber of Commerce supports three such commercial high schools at its own expense, and conducts free evening classes for adults in special subjects. The commercial high schools charge a considerable fee, and funds have been raised by private subscription, so that these items go far toward defraying the expenses of the schools—in two cases, indeed, yield a net income; but the general deficit is met by the Chamber itself.

The great school at Leipzig is supported by the Chamber of Commerce of that city; while the still greater school at Vienna is maintained by an association of business men formed for this purpose.

Closely connected with the proposition that a Commercial High School is demanded in the interests of our public educational system, is my last proposition that it is called for in the interest of the boys themselves. This is, of course, the converse almost of the first. It is proper that the community should provide facilities for the youth to get a preparation for college or the professional school; it is proper for it to provide facilities to get a preparation for the engineering school or for the life of the shops or the factories; but it is no less proper for it to provide facilities for the youth to get a training in preparation for the great field of business and commercial life. It is, indeed, unfair to look out for the interests of the youth who wishes to enter a profession or take up engineering, and yet do nothing for him who wishes to enter a business career.

Of course, in planning such a school, reference must be had to the fair claims of an educational institution. Just as the Central High School does not undertake to teach law or medicine or theology, but does aim to give that general training which is common and desirable to the members of all the professions; just as the Manual Training High School does not undertake to prepare its students to be carpenters, machinists, and engineers; but does aim to give that general training which is common

to all the various branches of skilled manual labor and which underlies the calling of engineers; so the Commercial High School would not undertake to turn out a cotton, or wool, or grain merchant, a banker, broker, or insurance agent; but it would aim to give a training and a body of knowledge which would be found equally useful in all these and similar occupations. The Commercial High School would be expected to keep in mind, as its sister institutions, that the man is after all higher than his calling, that its work is education and training, not cramming; and that its pupils should be first of all honest men, intelligent and educated gentlemen, and patriotic and public spirited citizens, and then good brokers, bankers, and merchants—or rather that they should be one and all at the same time.

Before closing, it may not be amiss to indicate briefly the contents of the curriculum of such a school. It should be, in my opinion, at least three years in length, and better four than three, admitting boys directly from the grammar schools of the city, as do our present high schools.

Accounting, of course, should occupy a prominent place. It ought to be taught more as a matter of principle than detail, *i. e.*, with an idea of enabling the pupils to understand easily any system which they may have to learn in subsequent life, rather than trying to make expert accountants of them in any one line. It should be at once more scientific and more practical than at present. It should be used, moreover, as a means of studying commercial and industrial life. If a man understands thoroughly the system of accounting which a great business house has developed as a result of its daily experience through years of work, he has gained an insight into some of the most characteristic features of that business.

The books of a great railway corporation, for example, are an epitome not only of the actual transactions of such a company, but they are a reflex of the ideas of the managers as to some of the most difficult questions of policy in regard to transportation.

This subject of accounting needs moreover, much more attention than it has received thus far. When it is impossible for the managers of a great railway system after months of effort to do more than indicate in a very general way what has been done with the funds belonging to the company, there is surely needed no argument on this question.

Side by side with accounting should be pursued, of course, the ordinary mathematical courses of a high school, except that some attention should be given to the application of arithmetic and algebra to the operations of

commercial life—including operations in commission and interest, calculation of all sorts, foreign exchange, arbitration of exchange, foreign systems of weights, measures, and money, interest on stock, bonds, annuities, premiums, etc.

The History of Commerce and commercial systems should also form a constituent of the course. The youth should study the origin and development of commerce and its methods from the earliest times down to the present—both as to the articles which have formed the staples of commerce and the methods by which business was transacted.

Commercial Geography—dealing with the origin of, and the methods of obtaining and producing, the various articles of modern commerce, should also receive much attention.

The study of commercial products and their peculiarities is also important. The youth who has completed such a course should know in a general way the various purposes, for example, for which the different kinds of wool are utilized—should understand why a manufacturer of woollen goods needs wool from a certain place in the world for his product, and why that particular kind of wool is grown successfully in that particular place. He should also be able to recognise by sight the most important grades and conditions of this product.

A consideration of the modern systems of transportation should also be included in such a course—not merely a history of its origin and development—but an examination of the different systems of railroad and steamship tariffs and the principles underlying them, together with the various methods of shipment and the laws relating to the responsibility of shipper and transporter.

It would go without the saying that opportunity should be offered to pursue modern languages so thoroughly that the pupil could speak and write them with fluency, so as to utilize them in business correspondence. In such a school Spanish should receive special attention, as the possibility of spreading our trade rapidly in the South American states depends, among other things, on our having properly educated young men who can go into those countries and transact business in their languages.

Training in penmanship and business correspondence, and the correct and fluent use of English, would be understood as fundamental elements in such a course; while general history and literature, American history and American literature, and our American political system and Political Economy should all receive that ample attention which their importance

in the liberal training of educated American citizens demands. Opportunity should also be given to those students who desire it to learn stenography and typewriting, and other subjects of instruction represented in our ordinary business college courses.

It is believed that a curriculum based on these ideas, worked out in its details by competent educators and properly taught by experienced teachers, could afford a training which every young fellow would do well to obtain, if possible, before entering upon a practical career in business.

OUTLINE OF A PROPOSED CURRICULUM FOR A COMMERCIAL HIGH SCHOOL

N. B.—The curriculum is arranged for four years: if the conditions allow only a three years' course, the fourth year may be dropped, letting the course for the first three years remain unchanged.

FIRST YEAR.	SECOND YEAR.
Rhetoric2	English Literature2
Algebra2	Algebra completed }2
Accounting.....2	Geometry begun }2
Chemistry2	Accounting2
Physical Geography.....2	General History2
American History2	Biology.....2
Business Correspondence }2	Commercial Geography.....2
and Penmanship }2	Commercial Arithmetic.....2
*First Foreign Language.....3	History of Industries2
Second Foreign Language.....3	*First Foreign Language.....2
	Second Foreign Language.....2
THIRD YEAR.	FOURTH YEAR.
Geometry completed.....2	Industrial Chemistry2
Physics.....2	Financial History of U. S.....2
Commercial Law.....2	Taxation2
Political Economy.....2	Study of Transportation—Rail- way, Steamships, Tariffs, etc...2
History of Commerce2	Local Government.....2
Commercial Legislation of Foreign Countries.....2	International Law2
Civil Government.....2	Money and Banking2
Study of Commercial Products...2	*First Foreign Language.....3
*First Foreign Language.....2	Second Foreign Language.....3
Second Foreign Language.....2	

* Each student is required to take two of the following languages: French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

As optional studies, if it seems desirable, may be offered: Stenography, Typewriting, etc., and advanced courses in each of the subjects indicated, so that the better students may be enabled to utilize their time fully.